

Visitor Guide

Great Sand Dunes
National Park
and Preserve



Welcome to one of the world's most
diverse national parks!



Inset photos, from left: Wheelchair users may access the edge of the dunes via a firm blue mat (see page 2 for more accessible options including dunes wheelchairs); Hikers find their efforts rewarded by views of Upper Sand Creek Basin; Red osier dogwood and aspen leaves color Montville Nature Trail each fall; In late spring Medano Creek offers fun for all ages!



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Getting Started
¡Bienvenidos!
Information you'll need to prepare for your visit. Facilities, camping, programs, and local services.
Información en español, página 2.



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Exploring Your Park
Trails and routes in the national park and preserve. Color map, trail and route descriptions, and a chart with distances for each trail are included.



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Natural Wonders
Other nearby San Luis Valley features including Zapata Falls, Blanca Peak, South Zapata Lake, national wildlife refuges, and many wetlands.

For Your Safety

- Weather** The weather changes rapidly at Great Sand Dunes; be prepared! Storms and cold temperatures can occur any time of year. If you see a thunderstorm approaching, get off the dunes immediately. **Lightning** strikes can be fatal. For general weather information, see page 2.
- Hot Sand** On summer afternoons, the sand surface can reach 140°F (60° C). **Bring closed shoes**, and be careful with your pets' feet. Hike the dunes early morning or evening during summer. Although the sand surface can become hot, summer daytime highs are typically in the low 80s F (*upper 20s C*).
- Wildlife** Never feed wild animals. It is unhealthy for them, and dangerous to you. **Drive slowly** on park and area roads to prevent accidents with crossing animals. **Bears and mountain lions** may be encountered; pick up the "Wild Ways" handout at the Visitor Center to learn more about these animals. In the campground, always store food, toiletries and trash in the bear-proof boxes provided at each site. While there are no poisonous snakes or scorpions in this high elevation park, there are rattlesnakes at lower elevations elsewhere in the San Luis Valley. Wear insect repellent to deter mosquitoes and no-see-ums, especially near water.
- Altitude** Park elevations range from 7,515' to 13,604' (2291m to 4146m) above sea level. The Visitor Center and campground are at approximately 8,200' (2499m). Altitude sickness may affect a few. Symptoms include shortness of breath, headaches, and nausea. **Drink plenty of water**, take it slow, and avoid alcoholic drinks. Seek medical attention if your symptoms are severe.
- Emergency** **Contact a ranger or call 911.** Telephones are located at the Visitor Center, Dunes parking lot, and at the campground kiosk.



Keep wildlife wild.
Use bear-proof boxes provided.



Facilities

The Visitor Center is open daily from 9 am to 6 pm from Memorial Day to Labor Day. Hours vary the rest of the year; please call for times. Rangers are available to answer questions and provide assistance. The Visitor Center offers an introductory movie, interactive exhibits for all ages, bookstore, first aid assistance, and viewing scope. Phone 719-378-6399.

Interpretive Programs



Your visit can be more rewarding when you better understand the environment around you. Nature walks, short talks, and evening programs are offered most days during the summer months, and many days in spring and fall. See the weekly schedule of events posted at the Visitor Center, campground bulletin boards, and the Dunes parking area.

Free programs for large groups visiting the park and preserve may also be reserved in advance by calling 719-378-6344. Topics include geology, plants, wildlife, and history.

Accessibility

Two sand wheelchairs are available for loan; inquire at the Visitor Center. Accessible restrooms are at the Visitor Center, Dunes parking lot, and campground. The Visitor Center, amphitheater, and ranger programs held at these locations are accessible. Three accessible campsites are located in the campground. For a backcountry experience, Sawmill Canyon Backcountry Site offers a graded trail to a tent pad and accessible privy. Contact the Visitor Center to reserve it.



Weather

Weather is typically sunny, but temperatures are relatively cool all year at this elevation of 8,200 feet (2499m). Summer highs average in the 80s F (20s°C), with lows in the 40s F (4°C). High winds can develop during storms, creating cold wind-chill factors. Summer evenings are



often cool. Spring can be windy with unpredictable temperatures. Fall is usually pleasant and dry. In winter, sub-zero temperatures are common every night. Bring warm, layered clothing any time of the year.

Camping

Great Sand Dunes offers developed car camping, 4WD backcountry camping, and backpacking. Pinyon Flats is a developed campground containing 88 sites with picnic tables and fire grates. Fourty-four sites are reservable at www.recreation.gov. There are no hook-ups, but restrooms include flush toilets and sinks. Sites cost \$14.00 per night for a



maximum of 6 people, 2 tents, and 2 vehicles. Campsites vary in size; some sites may not fit larger RVs. *Checkout time is 10 am.* Three sites for groups of 15 or more may be reserved at www.recreation.gov. Group sites cost \$65-\$80 per night depending on size. *Checkout time is 1:00 pm for group sites.*

Wood gathering is not permitted; firewood is sold at the Visitor Center, campground, or the Oasis store. Please pitch tents within rock walls. Quiet hours are from 10 pm to 6 am; generators may run between 7 am and 8 pm.

Backpacking requires a free permit from the Visitor Center.

You may camp on the dunes, in one of 7 designated sites along Sand Ramp Trail, or off-trail in the national preserve.

Backcountry vehicular camping is permitted along the Medano Pass Primitive Road in the national preserve only. This requires a high-clearance 4WD vehicle, and a minimum 5 mile drive on a soft sand road. Camping along the road is limited to designated first-come, first-served campsites. For guidelines and seasonal closures for this area, check with a ranger.

Entrance Fees

- \$3 per person age 16 and up
- Children free
- Great Sand Dunes Annual Pass: \$15
- America the Beautiful Annual Pass for all nat'l parks: \$80
- Senior lifetime pass: \$10

Pets

Pets are permitted in the main day use areas and in the national preserve as long as they are on a leash less than 6 feet long. *Pets are not permitted in the national park backcountry; ask for a map of permitted pet areas.* Please clean up after your pet. During summer months, take your pet on the dunes in early morning or evening to avoid hot sand.



¡Bienvenidos!

¡Bienvenidos al Parque Nacional de las Grandes Dunas! Mientras que usted esté visitando, esperamos que aproveche la oportunidad de explorar algunas de las características únicas del parque. Desde las dunas más altas de Norteamérica hasta algunos de los picos más altos de los Rocky Mountains, este rico ecosistema sorprende continuamente a los visitantes con la estupenda diversidad de vida y paisaje.

Cosas populares para hacer:

¡Suba a las dunas! El paseo desde el Centro de Visitantes a la cima de la duna más alta toma como 2 horas para dar la vuelta. La elevación y la arena lo hace algo dificultoso, pero ¡vale la pena! Esté preparado para la temperatura alta de la arena, y lleve protección para el sol y agua para tomar.

¡Disfrutar el Arroyo del Medano! En primavera y verano, el arroyo corre por la base de las dunas. Los niños de todas las edades gozan en chapalear, jugar, o aunque sea nada más que remojar en el arroyo.

¡Compartir una comida en el campo! El área de comer que esta cerca del Centro de Visitantes tiene mesas, parrillas y baños sanitarios cerca. Se permiten fuegos de carbón en las parrillas; por favor extíngalos totalmente antes de irse. Y por favor: no haga fuego con leña ni alimento a los animales.

Para Seguridad a Las Grandes Dunas de Arena

En el verano, las temperaturas en la superficie de la arena pueden alcanzar hasta los ¡140 grados F (60 grados de C)! Use calcetines y zapatos en vez de sandalias para proteger sus pies contra quemaduras severas. También, recuerde traer protección para el sol, bastante agua, un sombrero, y alimentación adicional.

El Centro de Visitantes está a 8200' (2.470m) de altura sobre el nivel del mar. Usted puede sentir la respiración entrecortada, o sentirse mareado. Vaya despacio, descanse a menudo, y tome bastante agua.

Se permiten las mascotas en las dunas pero deben siempre mantenerse con correas. Camine temprano en la mañana o bien de tarde para proteger los pies de la arena caliente.

Los basureros de basura están situados en el estacionamiento, en las áreas de la comida y de acampar. Nunca deje el alimento donde un oso u otro animal podría encontrarlo. Manténgase alejado de los animales salvajes : alimentar a los animales salvajes es malsano para ellos y peligroso para usted. ¡Usted está en el territorio del oso! No deje alimentos o los refrigeradores desatendidos en ningún momento. Cuando usted no está comiendo, almacene todo el alimento y bebidas en su vehículo con todas las ventanas cerradas.

Esté preparado para el clima fresco, también en el verano. Esperamos que usted disfrute de su visita a las Grandes Dunas de Arena. Pida más información en español en el Centro de Visitantes.

Local Services

The facilities and services listed, unless otherwise noted, are located within 10 miles of the entrance to Great Sand Dunes National Park and Preserve. The towns of Mosca, Hooper, Blanca, Fort Garland, and Alamosa offer additional facilities and services, but not all services are available in each town. *In winter, the closest gas and food are in Mosca or Blanca.* For a full list of area lodging, visit:

www.nps.gov/grsa/planyourvisit/lodging.htm

County websites: www.alamosa.org, www.saguache.org, and www.custercountyco.com

National Park Service

General information (recorded, 24 hours) 719-378-6300

Visitor Center and bookstore 719-378-6399

11999 Hwy. 150 Mosca, CO 81146

www.nps.gov/grsa

email: grsa_interpretation@nps.gov

Lodging

Great Sand Dunes Lodge (April-October) 719-378-2900

www.gsdllodge.com

Oasis Motel (two rooms) 719-378-2222

www.greatdunes.com/lodging.html

Zapata Ranch 719-378-2356 x1

www.zranch.org

Campgrounds

Pinyon Flats (www.recreation.gov) 719-378-6399

Great Sand Dunes Oasis (seasonal) 719-378-2222

San Luis Lakes State Park (seasonal) 1-800-678-2267

www.coloradostateparks.reserveamerica.com

Convenience Store/Gasoline/Restaurant

Oasis Store/Gas Station (April-October) 719-378-2222

Oasis Restaurant (May - Sept.) 719-378-2222

Medical Facilities (in Alamosa)

24-hour Emergency Care and by Appointment

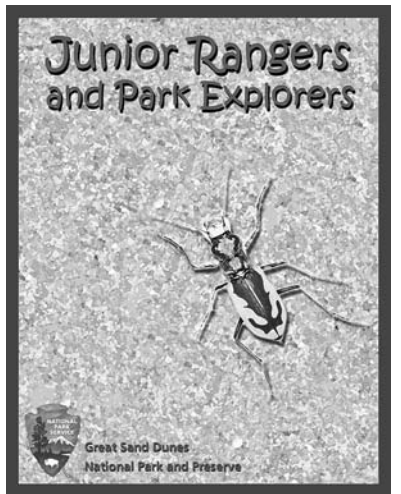
San Luis Valley Regional Medical Center 719-589-2511

Alamosa Family Medical Clinic 719-589-3658

Convenient Care Clinic (1-10pm, 7 days/wk) 719-589-2562

Junior Rangers and Park Explorers

Kids and learners of all ages: Great Sand Dunes NP&P has a booklet of fun learning activities for ages 3-103! Kids 3-12 can complete sections of the booklet and activities corresponding to their ages to become Junior Rangers. Visitors 13 and older complete sections of the booklet and activities to become Park Explorers. All ages earn a badge or patch upon completion.



Completion of required sections and activities usually takes one to three hours, including exploring the park, learning from ranger programs, and/or studying the Visitor Center exhibits and movie. Ask at the Visitor Center desk for a booklet and start working toward your free badge or patch!

Entrance Fees 2010-2011

Per person 16 and older: \$3 for one week

Children under 16: FREE

Great Sand Dunes Annual Pass: \$15 per family for one year

America the Beautiful – National Parks and Federal Recreational Lands Passes



Annual Pass
per family
\$80



Lifetime Pass
for Seniors:
\$10



Lifetime Pass
for permanent
disability: Free

Your Fees at Work

At Great Sand Dunes National Park and Preserve, your fees directly benefit you. This year's work includes:

- Burying overhead electrical lines in the park. In the next few years there will be several phases in this very large project, which improves the reliability of power, reduces risk in the event of wildfires, and improves the natural viewshed.



- Trail work throughout the park and preserve completed by Public Land Corps youth crews.

VIPs and Artists in Residence

At Great Sand Dunes, volunteers-in-parks (VIPs) work with nearly every division, and become an integral part of the park staff. To learn more, contact Volunteer Coordinator Libbie Landreth at 719-378-6342, or email libbie_landreth@nps.gov
Web: www.nps.gov/volunteer



Artists in Residence are volunteers who spend two weeks in the park creating and sharing art with the public. Visit: www.nps.gov/grsa/artists-in-residence.htm to learn more about the program at Great Sand Dunes; call 719-378-6343 with any questions. Thanks to all the volunteers at Great Sand Dunes!

Thanks to Our Partners and Neighbors



WNPA is a non-profit organization designed to further educational work in the national parks. Net proceeds from bookstore sales are returned to the National Park Service for education and publications, including annual funding of this newspaper. www.wnpa.org



Friends of the Dunes, Inc. is a non-profit citizens' support group for Great Sand Dunes National Park and Preserve. The Friends provide a forum for citizen involvement in planning, focus public interest on issues, and provide volunteer and financial assistance to the dunes. For more information, visit www.friendsofgreatsanddunes.org



www.fs.fed.us/r2/riogrande



www.fws.gov/alamosa



www.nature.org



www.coloradofieldinstitute.org



www.wildlife.state.co.us



www.parks.state.co.us/parks/sanluis

Exploring

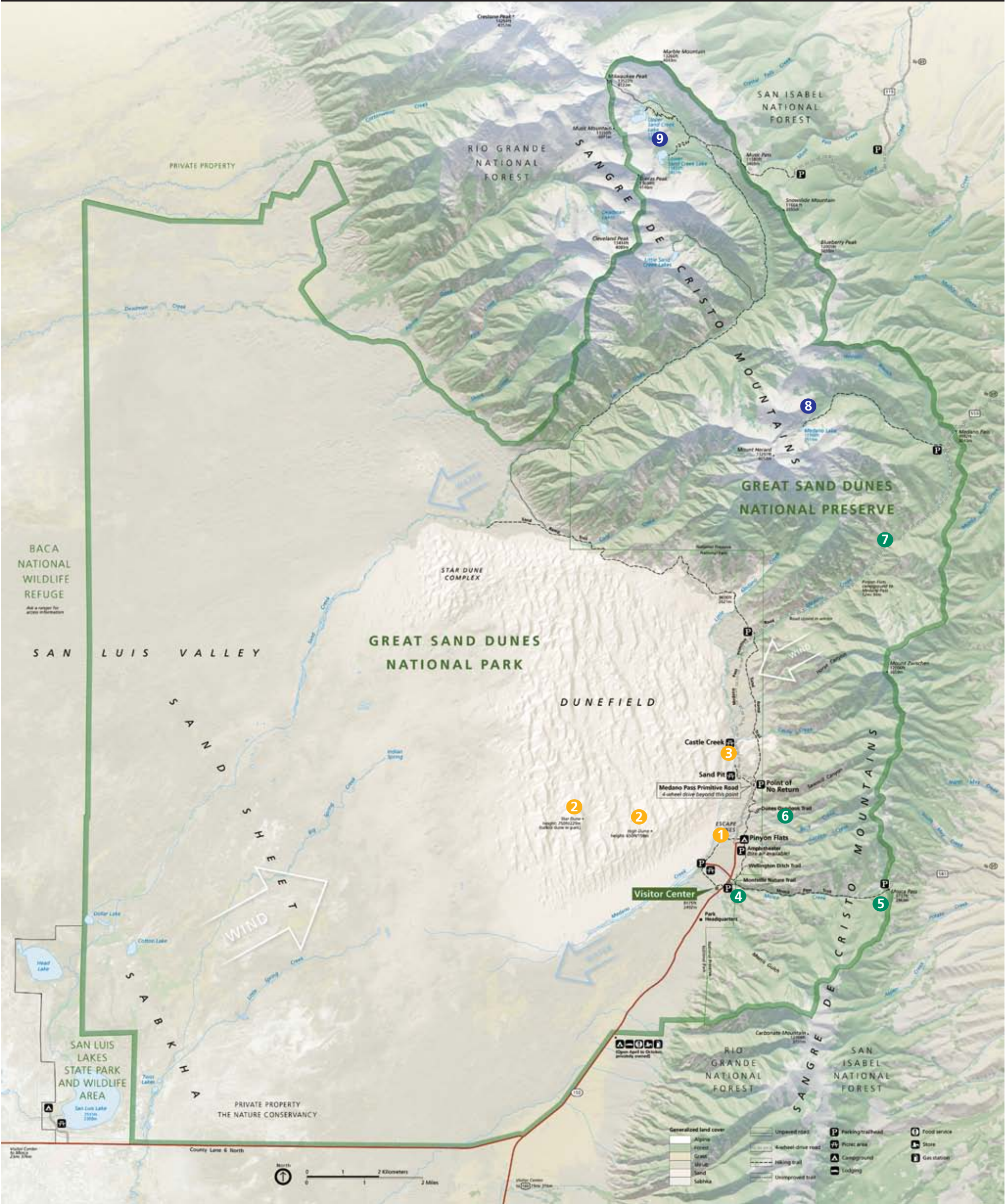


Protecting Your Park

Natural and cultural resources at Great Sand Dunes National Park and Preserve are protected by federal law. It is illegal to collect plants, animals, natural objects, and historic or prehistoric artifacts. By leaving them undisturbed, all generations may enjoy and learn from them. While firearms may be legally possessed in this national park, it is illegal to hunt or target shoot. Hunting is permitted in the national preserve by permit and in season only.

Map of Great Sand Dunes National Park and Preserve

Numbered locations in colored circles are described on the following page.



This map is also available separately as the official park map and guide, distributed at the Entrance Station or Visitor Center. Download it at www.nps.gov/grsa/planyourvisit/maps.htm Detailed area topographic maps are available for purchase at the Visitor Center.

From desert sands to alpine tundra, explore the unusual combination of landscapes all found at this special place. Below are a few suggested treks.

Check with a ranger for advanced climbing routes and other off-trail hikes in the mountains and grasslands. Also see the hiking chart on the following page.

Dunes Exploration

Explore any part of the 30 square mile dunefield you wish; there are no designated trails in the sand. A dunes-accessible wheelchair is available for free loan at the Visitor Center. In summer months, plan to hike the dunes in morning or evening to avoid hot sand.

1 Medano Creek When there’s water in Medano Creek at the base of the dunes, adults and kids alike love to splash in the stream. Watch for waves in the water, a phenomenon called “surge flow.”

2 The tallest dunes The High Dune is neither the highest in elevation nor the tallest, but it looks that way from the Dunes parking lot. It is about 650 feet (198m) high. Cross the flats and hike up the ridgelines to reach a 360 degree view of the dunefield. From High Dune, the tallest dune you see to the west is the Star Dune, rising 750 feet (229m) from the valley floor - the tallest dune in North America. To reach it from High Dune, journey another mile and a half up and down across the dunes to its summit.

3 Eastern dune ridge With high clearance 4WD vehicle, drive to Sand Pit or Castle Creek Picnic Areas. Or, with 2WD vehicle, drive to Point of No Return, then hike 2/3 mile (1km) to Sand Pit. Castle Creek offers an impressively tall, steep dune face. Both areas have close access to Medano Creek.

Grasslands/Wetlands

Ask at the Visitor Center for a free information sheet on visiting grasslands and wetlands.



Western tanager (forest)



American pika (alpine tundra)



Short-horned lizard (grasslands and subalpine forest)



Rio Grande cutthroat trout (Medano Creek); this species is endemic to the San Luis Valley



Elk herd (grasslands)



Pelicans (wetlands)

The park’s diverse animal life reflects its diversity of ecosystems. Mammal, reptile, amphibian, and bird species live here in habitats ranging from wetlands to alpine tundra. Above are some suggested places to experience these habitats.

Forest Trails

4 Montville Nature Trail Keep this 1/2 mile (0.7km) hike as an option for afternoon as an escape from the heat of the dunes. Walk along a shady mountain trail named for a late 1800s settlement, comprising 20 houses in its heyday. Rest near the trail’s highpoint, where you’ll find outstanding views of Mt. Herard, the dunes and the valley.

5 Mosca Pass Trail Hike along Mosca Creek to the summit of a low pass in the Sangre de Cristo mountains, winding through aspen and evergreen forests. Allow 2-3 hours to reach the pass; the trail is 3 1/2 miles (5.7km) one-way. American Indians and early settlers used this route for travel into the Valley.

6 Dunes Overlook/Sand Ramp Trail For a view of the dunes from the foothills, begin hiking the Sand Ramp Trail in Loop 2 of the campground. Scenery abounds in all directions. Although only 2 miles (3.2km) round trip to the overlook, this trek can be extended, as the Sand Ramp trail continues for 11 miles (18 km) total around the eastern and northern perimeter of the dunes.

7 Medano Pass 4WD Road Driving this road requires high clearance 4-wheel drive (not recommended for small sport utility vehicles.) Soft sand, creek crossings, and a rocky roadbed high on the pass combine for a moderately challenging drive. However, it is scenic, with views of cliffs, conifers, and 13,297’ Mt. Herard. The road may be closed at various locations depending on seasonal conditions, including high creek crossings in spring and deep snow in winter.

Alpine Trails

8 Medano Lake/Mount Herard Access this trailhead from the Medano Pass 4WD road. Beginning at 10,000’ (3048m) above sea level, the trail climbs 2000’ (610m) over 3.7 miles (6km) through meadows and forests, ending at an alpine lake. For advanced hikers, continue on to the summit of 13,297’ (4053m) Mount Herard for a spectacular aerial view of the dunes.

9 Music Pass/Sand Creek Lakes/other alpine peaks The alpine scenery here is stunning, but requires a long drive and moderate hike. Check with a ranger for conditions before travel. The eastern trailhead for Music Pass is reached from Highway 69, 4.5 miles south of Westcliffe. Turn off Highway 69 at the sign for Music Pass. At the “T” junction, turn left onto South Colony Road. At the end of the ranch fence on the right, you’ll see another sign for Music Pass. 2WD drivers should park where the Rainbow Trail crosses Music Pass Road. From the lower trailhead, walk 3.5 miles (5.6km) to the pass. 4WD drivers may drive another 2.5 miles to the upper trailhead. From here, hike 1 mile (1.6km) to the pass. Music Pass is at treeline, with a great view of the Upper Sand Creek Basin. From the pass, hike 3.5 miles (5.6km) farther to one of the Sand Creek Lakes, or to any one of the 13,000’ peaks above the basin. *The Essential Guide to Great Sand Dunes National Park and Preserve* has climbing information for the peaks. You may also access these lakes and peaks via the Sand Ramp Trail, connecting with the Sand Creek Trail from the west. Check with a ranger for conditions and a permit for this strenuous multi-day trip.

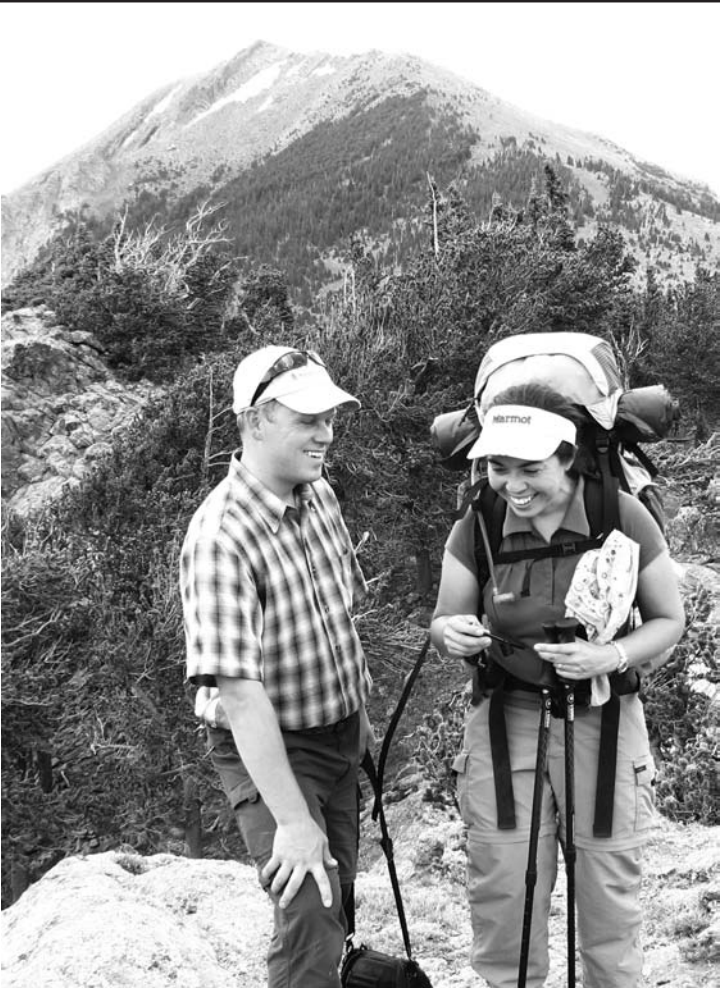
Hiking Chart

Easy to Moderate Hikes			
Name	One- way Distance Miles (km)	Comments	Location of Trailhead
Medano Creek (or dry creekbed)	variable	Stroll up or down stream, relatively flat	Dunes Parking Lot
Sand Pit	.7 (1.2)	Medano Creek usually found year- round here	Point of No Return
Montville Nature Trail	.5 (.8) loop	Trail guide may be purchased at Visitor Center	Top of hill just north of Visitor Center
Campground Trail	.5 (.8)	Trail from campground to dunes	Campground, near Site 32
Escape Dunes and Ghost Forest	.75 (1.2)	Follow Medano Creek upstream to low dunes	Dunes Parking Lot
Medano Wetlands (seasonal)	1.3 (2)	Downstream to end of trees (ask ranger for locations and status)	Dunes Parking Lot
Castle Creek	2.5 (4)	Follow creek upstream	Dunes Parking Lot or Point of No Return TH
Dunes Overlook	1 (1.6)	Views from foothills	Sand Ramp Trailhead - Campground Loop 2
Wellington Ditch Trail	1 (1.6)	Relatively flat with views from foothills	Montville Parking Lot or Loop 3 of the campground
High Dune	1.15 (1.9)	Follow ridgelines until you reach the summit	Dunes Parking Lot
Mosca Pass	3.5 (5.6)	Forests, small stream	Montville Parking Lot
Sand Ramp Trail	variable, up to 11 (17.8)	Eastern and northern perimeter of dunes	Sand Ramp Trailhead - Campground Loop 2
Star Dune	3.8 (6.1)	Hike down Medano Creekbed to its base, then ascend ridge	Dunes Parking Lot
Difficult Hikes - Check with rangers first!			
Medano Lake	3.5 (5.6)	1,900- foot (579 m) elevation gain	Medano LakeTH (high- clearance 4WD needed)
Music Pass	With 4WD: 1 (1.6) With 2WD: 3.5 (5.6)	High pass at treeline, access to Upper Sand Creek Basin	2WD parking at Rainbow TH; 4WD parking at Music Pass TH
Carbonate Peak	4 (6.4)	Follow ridge from Revelation Pt. - ask at Visitor Center	Visitor Center Parking
Sand Creek Lakes	Lower - 3.0 (5.2) Upper - 3.5 (6.0)	Alpine lakes and majestic mountains	Music Pass 4WD TH
Mount Herard	5.2 (8.8)	Hike to 12,500' (3,180 m) saddle to west, then on to summit	Medano LakeTH - (high- clearance 4WD needed)

Top: Backpacking into Upper Sand Creek Basin in the national preserve offers a wilderness experience dramatically different from the park’s frontcountry.

Middle: Horseback riding is permitted in most parts of the park and preserve. Please obtain “Horse Use Guidelines” from the Visitor Center before riding.

Bottom: Montville Nature Trail provides a short foothills hike for all ages - a good afternoon option when summer sand temperatures are high.



Nearby Natural Features

These nearby natural features reveal more of the San Luis Valley’s beauty. The map below also indicates area historical museums.

Zapata Falls Recreation Area This 30 foot (9m) high waterfall cascades within a narrow chasm about 10 miles south of the dunes. It is especially refreshing on a summer afternoon. From the park entrance, drive south on Highway 150 to the Zapata Falls Recreation Area sign. Turn left and drive 3 miles (4.8km) up the gravel road, then hike 1/2 mile (0.8km) to the creek. Wade upstream into the narrow cave to view the falls. **Watch for falling rocks. Water is swift and deep in early summer.** Bureau of Land Management, 719-852-5941.



South Zapata Lake This is a good option for those who want to hike to an alpine lake, but don’t have high clearance 4WD to access alpine trailheads in Great Sand Dunes National Preserve. For day hikes to the lake, use the Zapata Falls trailhead listed above; overnight backpackers are required to use the trailhead 1 mile (1.6km) below the day use trailhead. From Zapata Falls, hike 4 miles (6.5km) farther along a maintained trail to the lake (2300’ or 701m elevation gain). Marmots and pikas chirp and whistle from the tundra slopes above. Twin Peaks, 13,580’ (4139 m) may be climbed by ascending the steep tundra west of the lake. US Forest Service, Rio Grande National Forest, 719-852-5941.



and 4. This road is considered one of the roughest roads in the state; 2WD vehicles can generally travel about one mile up the road and 4WD vehicles average about two miles before the road becomes extremely rough. From the highway turnoff, the summit of Blanca Peak is about eight miles away with an elevation gain of 6000 feet (1829m). Minimum-impact camping is permitted on Forest Service land at least 200 feet from water. Please follow “Leave No Trace” guidelines. US Forest Service, Rio Grande National Forest, 719-852-5941.

Blanca Peak The fourth highest peak in Colorado is part of a massif containing four fourteeners and four thirteeners. From the national park, drive south on Hwy 150 to the dirt road between mile markers 3



San Luis Lakes State Park and Wildlife Area The park features a recreational lake; the state wildlife area hosts diverse shore birds. The tate park is open year round; the wildlife area is closed February 15 - July 15 for nesting. <http://parks.state.co.us/Parks/SanLuis> 719-378-2020.



Blanca Wetlands Wildlife Habitat Area This area offers ideal habitat for waterfowl and shorebirds not found elsewhere in the San Luis Valley or Colorado. Trails weaving between the shallow ponds provide excellent wildlife observation opportunities. From Highway 17, take County Road 2S east about 7 miles. The wetlands are closed for nesting February 15 to July 15.



Alamosa National Wildlife Refuge Alamosa NWR contains thousands of acres of wetlands within the floodplain of the Rio Grande. Meadows, river oxbows, and riparian corridors support high species diversity and create ideal conditions for viewing waterfowl, songbirds, and other wildlife. The Visitor Center is open March-November. Contact for Alamosa and Monte Vista refuges: 719-589-4021 www.fws.gov/alamosa



Monte Vista National Wildlife Refuge This 14,804-acre refuge is home to thousands of shore birds. The refuge is open during daylight hours, 7 days a week.



Alamosa Wetlands is a city-owned open space area protecting wetlands near the Rio Grande adjacent to Alamosa. Developed with easy hiking trails and parking, there is close access

to the Rio Grande River and some wetlands. While there is less variety of mammals and birds than at other more remote wetlands, pelicans sometimes nest here. From Highway 17 one mile north of Highway 160, turn west at the Splashland swimming pool, then take the first left turn. Park along this road in designated lots.



Russell Lakes National Natural Landmark

The most extensive bulrush marsh in Colorado, Russell Lakes represents one of the few remaining large,

high-altitude, alkaline marshes in the southern Rocky Mountains. The site supports large numbers of flora and fauna and is an outstanding resting and breeding site for waterfowl. Managed as a state wildlife area, most of it is closed February 15 to July 15 to protect nesting birds. Johnson Lake Trail is open year-round.

www.nature.nps.gov/nnl





National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Great Sand Dunes
National Park and Preserve
11999 Highway 150
Mosca, Colorado 81146

www.nps.gov/grsa



Sledding, skiing, or sandboarding on the dunes can be fun, but it works best after recent precipitation. Use smooth, hard, flat-bottomed sleds or skis; **cardboard does not work**. Please avoid fragile dunes vegetation.

EXPERIENCE YOUR AMERICA

K-12 Learning Opportunities

If you are a teacher or trip leader, consider scheduling an education program with Great Sand Dunes staff. Education programs are age-appropriate, correlated with Colorado Content Standards, and incorporate active learning in the park’s magnificent outdoor classroom. Hands-on field and classroom learning experiences can bring wildlife, plants, history, geology, and other subjects alive for learners of all styles.



- Reserve use of the Discovery Room at the Visitor Center
- Schedule a ranger to visit San Luis Valley classrooms or educational events
- Bring your group to the park for a ranger-led education program (reserve in advance)



“Out of the Blue” is Great Sand Dunes’ online curriculum for K-12 teachers and students:
www.nps.gov/grsa/resources/curriculum/intro.htm



- Online resources provide students who live far away with an engaging opportunity to learn about geology, hydrology, ecology, and cultural history.

“The entire website is very user friendly. With the range of activities you have it is easy to find an activity suitable for the learning style and ability of any student.”
- a 5th grade teacher

To learn more about educational opportunities at the Dunes or schedule a program, please contact Education Specialist Melanie Rawlins at 719-378-6344, or email melanie_rawlins@nps.gov
www.nps.gov/grsa/forteachers/index.htm